

Message Text

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TAGS: EAID TBIO TS

SUBJ: AMERICAN HOSPITAL IN TUNISIA

REF: (A) TUNIS 1089

1. I MET WITH MINISTER OF HEALTH MZALI MARCH 4 TO REVIEW WITH HIM STATE OF PLAY RE PROPOSED AMERICAN HOSPITAL IN TUNISIA. MZALI CONFIRMED GOT INTENDS DEFINITELY TO CARRY OUT HOSPITAL PROJECT AND HAS ASKED DR. WALSH OF PROJECT HOPE TO INITIATE NEXT STEP. HE CHARACTERIZED LATTER AS ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN PLAN, WHICH WOULD INCLUDE MORE DETAIL RE SPECIFICS.

2. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION, MZALI SAID GOT HOPED CONSTRUCTION COSTS, AMOUNTING TO SOME \$12 MILLION, COULD BE SPLIT THREE WAYS BETWEEN GOT, ARAB OIL-PRODUCING STATE (PROBABLY QATAR) AND U.S. (USING U.S. TREASURY-OWNED DINARS). MZALI SAID HE LOOKED TO PROJECT HOPE TO ASSUME COSTS OF FUNDING AERICAN PHYSICIANS AND NURSES. SINCE EQUIPMENT WOULD BE AMERICAN, MZALI ALSO HOPED USG COULD FINANCE ITS PURCHASE. GOT WOULD PUT ITEM IN GOT BUDGET TO COVER ANNUAL OPERATING COSTS.

3. I DISABUSED MZALI OF HIS IMPRESSION THAT U.S. TREASURY-OWNED DINARS MIGHT BE AVAILABLE TO FINANCE CONSTRUCTION.
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BEST WE COULD DO WITH REGARD TO DINAR AVAILABILITY, I

CONTINUED, WOULD POSSIBLY BE TO CHANNEL SOME HEW DINAJ FUNDS INTO HOSPITAL TEACHING OR RESEARCH PROGRAM FACILITIES (STATE 42440 SUGGESTS POSSIBILITY IN THIS REGARD.) MZALI ACCEPTED THIS PHILOSOPHICALLY, AND SAID THAT IN THIS CASE GOT AND ARAB OIL-PRODUCER WOULD HAVE TO CARRY ALL CONSTRUCTION COSTS.

4. I NOTED THAT I HAD CONSISTENTLY DISCOURAGED GOT FROM ASSUMING AK AVAILABILITY OF USG FINANCIAR RESOURCES, BUT I ACKNOWLEDGED POSSIBILITY THAT USG MIGHT FIND WAYS OF ASSISTING IN FINANCING PURCHASES OF AMERICAN EQUIPMENT. WITHOUT GIVING ANY ASSURANCES, I UNDERTOOK TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITIES WITH WASHINGTON. MZALI AGAIN REMARKED THAT PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA ATTACHED HIGHEST IMPORTANCE TO THIS HOSPITAL PROJECT.

5. I ASKED IF MY ASSUMPTION CORRECT THAT GOT WOULD FUND INITIAL DESIGN COSTS. MZALI SAID GOT WOULD NORMALLY DO SO, WITH GOT MINISTRY OF EQUIPMENT UNDERTAKING TASK. HOWEVER, IT ESSENTIAL THAT AN AMERICAN FIRM DESIGN AMERICAN HOSPITAL AND HENCE A DOLLAR SOURCE NECESSARY. COULD USG HELP OUT ON THIS? I SAID I WOULD CHECK.

6. COMMENT. QUITE CLEARLY PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA AND MZALI ARE DETERMINED TO MOVE AHEAD ON AMERICAN HOSPITAL PROJECT. I BELIEVE THAT SUCCESSFUL ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THIS PROJECT IS IN U.S. INTERESTS. IT OFFERS CONSIDERABLE POTENTIAL NOT ONLY FOR SALES OF AMERICAN PRODUCTS BUT ALSO HOSPITAL COULD CONCEIVABLY SERVE AS AMERICAN-ORIENTED MEDICAL CENTER FOR MUCH OF NORTH AFRICA. ACCORDINGLY, I PROPOSE THAT WE ALLOCATE OUT OF FY-75 SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS FUND APPROXIMATELY \$200,000 TO DEFRAY COSTS OF DESIGN CONTRACT (DR. WALSH THINKS THIS COULD BE DONE FOR LESS) AND THAT WE BUDGET \$2 MILLION EACH IN FY-76 AND FY-77 TO COVER COST OF PURCHASE OF AMERICAN MEDICAL EQUIPMENT. MEANWHILE, WE WOULD EXPECT GOT, WITH OR WITHOUT HELP OF ARAB OIL-PRODUCER, TO FUND ALL CONSTRUCTION COSTS AS WELL AS \$3 MILLION PLUS NEEDED FOR "OTHER COSTS.

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